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ART. V. — *The Life of Alexander Hamilton.* By JOHN T. MORSE, JR. 2 vols. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co. 1876.

“ORATOR, Writer, Soldier, Jurist, Financier,” are the words engraved upon the monument in Boston raised to the memory of Alexander Hamilton. False as monumental inscriptions proverbially are, few persons would deny that Hamilton may justly claim distinction under all the titles in this imposing list. How much and how high distinction he attained in these several capacities are the only questions to be settled, but the answers may well tax severely the strongest and clearest judgment. Tradition says that in the bitterness of personal and political conflict one of his great enemies declared that “he never could see what there was in that little West Indian”;* while his other great opponent, possessing a far keener insight into human nature, pronounced him “really a Colossus to the anti-Republican party.”† Public opinion to-day might not coincide exactly with either estimate, but would certainly more nearly approach the latter than the former. But with whatever views or with whatever prejudices one comes to the study of Hamilton’s career, it is no easy matter to write his life. To analyze Hamilton’s character is the simplest part of such an undertaking. His was not a complex nature, and like many great men, especially those of strongly masculine qualities, the mental lines are clear, direct, and easily followed. The first difficulty is to estimate his worth and the measure of his success in the many fields of human intelligence which he entered. Of all the leaders of our versatile race, no one except Franklin displayed so much versatility as Hamilton. The ability to appreciate and properly criticise him, under all aspects and in all his varying pursuits, demands a breadth of knowledge, a liberality of education, and a strength of mental grasp which are by no means common. Yet the second difficulty, which arises in considering Hamilton’s outside relations with the men and circum-

* John Adams.

† Thomas Jefferson: Letter to Madison, Works, Vol. IV. p. 121.

stances by which he was surrounded, is far greater than the first. Not only did Hamilton formulate and carry through a policy which gave existence to our government, and take a principal part against the opposition aroused, but his history fairly bristles with controversies and is inextricably interwoven with bitter personal quarrels. No biographer has an easy task, but Mr. Morse has selected one of peculiar difficulty. The *Life of Hamilton*, by his son, is but a fragment which stops short of the great period in his career; and the subsequent work by the same author is not a life but a history, and one so detailed as to be useless except to specialists. There was nothing to be undone, no bad work to be done over again. Mr. Morse, therefore, had the advantage of a clear field in which there was no predecessor. To be so situated is fortunate, but the position is one which greatly increases responsibility. To err in an attempt to correct old errors is far better than to propagate wholly new ones. To fail in repairing work already done is a less evil than bad and insufficient construction where nothing has been accomplished. In the one case the matter can hardly be worse than it was before; in the other errors are sown in fresh soil, and on the future historian devolves the disagreeable and difficult task of exposing and destroying them.

To but few men has the power been given to write, in the highest sense of the words, a history at once scientific and popular; and the same is true in a still greater degree, perhaps, of biographies. A few "*Lives*" have satisfied the demands of the student and historian as well as those of the general public, but they are landmarks in literature which occupy a great and singularly lonely eminence. Between the perfect and the wholly bad there is of course a wide range, and perhaps in regard to some works time alone, not the contemporaneous critic, can decide whether they have or have not elements of permanent interest.

Mr. Morse has given us a very readable and popular *Life of Hamilton*. This may be fairly conceded, and for this we are duly grateful. It is well that the life of such a man should be put into an accessible form. To write a purely popular book thoroughly well is by no means easy; and yet to say even this

of any new book is but scant praise, with which no author ought to be content. Mr. Morse certainly would not be satisfied by such a kind of patronage, for he has evidently tried to do more than merely popularize. Our intention, therefore, is to look at the book as a whole, without taking it up in detail, and without pretending to weigh out applause here and blame there, or to make a cheap display of knowledge by burrowing after blunders. There are in Mr. Morse's work more inaccuracies than there ought to be in any book, popular or not; but they lie for the most part on the surface, and would be remedied in a second edition. But at the outset it is only fair to say that if the book is to be rigorously judged by the severe standard of difficulties and responsibilities above indicated as the proper test in such an undertaking, Mr. Morse has, in our opinion, failed. In dealing with the career of such a man, the biographer ought not only to approach his subject in the fairest and most candid spirit, but ought to remember that it requires a treatment commensurate with that far-reaching policy and with those deep and bitter controversies which divided a nation in her infancy and shaped her destinies in her youth.

The danger of all biographers is partisanship, although even of this a certain amount is no doubt desirable, or all sympathy is lost. In Hamilton's case, more allowance in this respect must be made than in most others; but, nevertheless, Mr. Morse has gone too far. Too great a desire to consider Hamilton as always in the right is everywhere displayed. The natural result is, that at the doubtful or indefensible points in his career the fatal tone of the lawyer pleading for the criminal is painfully apparent. This is a wrong to the hero no less than to the public. If the man cannot bear the light of truth as well as the most searching criticism, he ought to fall; if he can, then he is injured by ingenious defences offered to conceal his faults. The wrong to the public by such a course is obvious. Mr. Morse is not, perhaps, liable to these strictures in all cases or in their greatest severity, but he is still liable to them in too great a degree. The candid spirit alluded to, which seeks only justice, is far too often wanting.

To determine how far Mr. Morse has succeeded, or how far he has failed in rising to the level of his subject, demands a

discussion of the character and career of Hamilton himself. But before proceeding with that criticism on Hamilton which can alone bring out points of difference with his biographer, a few remarks on the general construction of the book will not be out of place. By far the best portion of it, and a very excellent piece of work, is the chapter on "The Treasury and Federalism." Perhaps Mr. Morse sees the merits more clearly than the defects of the Federal policy; but he has grasped firmly the true nature of that policy, and his exposition is well and forcibly done. The chapter reads like an essay, it is true, and this is a difficulty and fault with the latter half of the entire work. Chronological sequence and historical continuity are disregarded, until the second volume resembles a series of disconnected essays rather than a biography. This is a defect in more ways than one; it abates the interest of the narrative as well as the historical value of the book, and tends to destroy its dramatic effect. Another defect is the omission of all references. In a work which draws freely on material already printed, and which contains numerous literal quotations, nothing is more trying than to have no references in the form of foot-notes, and not even a list of the authorities consulted. Such a mistake bears most hardly against the author, for it annoys every competent critic and produces a strong sense of doubt and insecurity even among persons who would never think of verifying a citation.

Hamilton's precocity was very striking, even in an age and country remarkable for precocious men. When only fourteen years old he conducted, in the absence of his employer, the large and complicated business of a West India merchant. At eighteen years, while still a college student, he wrote two of the most successful controversial political pamphlets which appeared at a time when that form of agitation was used by the ablest men, and when there were not only vigorous enemies to be encountered, but eager and friendly rivals to be surpassed. At the same age he had the courage to address excited public meetings, and to restrain by cool arguments, at the risk of his life, the frenzies of the mob. It is very significant that a boy of that age, slight in stature, and a stranger in the land, should have been able, on such occasions, to speak successfully. He

soon entered the army, and a year later was picked out by Washington to serve as his confidential aide. Even at that early period of their friendship, Washington employed Hamilton to draft many of his important letters, and intrusted him with most delicate and trying missions. Nothing in the intercourse of these two men during the Revolution, nothing in all Hamilton's career, gives such a vivid idea of his intellectual power as his quarrel with Washington in 1781. The whole affair, properly considered, is a very striking one; Mr. Morse apparently regards it simply as an obvious and trifling disagreement. Such it was on the surface; but if examined carefully with due regard to the characters of the parties, it is full of meaning. The quarrel has now become famous and its outlines are simple. The young aide kept his general waiting, or at least the latter thought so, and reproved him for his delay with some asperity. Whereupon the young gentleman drew himself up and said they must part. In explanation of his conduct he wrote the well-known letter to Schuyler in which he expressed general disapproval of Washington's personal address, manners, and temper. Washington, on the other hand, made an immediate overture towards reconciliation, which was rejected by Hamilton, who, having at a subsequent period got over his bad temper, applied to Washington for assistance. Washington at once received him kindly, and their friendship was never again interrupted. What is the true explanation of this singular action? Hamilton's part is easily accounted for. He was hot-tempered, self-asserting, and quarrelsome, and the tone of his letter, as well as the cold-blooded manner in which he used the pretext afforded by this trivial disagreement in order to quit what he chose to consider an inferior position, place him in no amiable light. Washington's conduct is more difficult to understand. He had spoken sharply, as he had a perfect right to do, to a tardy aide-de-camp. Yet he put himself to some trouble and to some sacrifice of personal feeling to conciliate a proud, overbearing boy. The picture of Washington, before whose very glance so hardy a man as Gouverneur Morris is said to have shrunk away abashed, faced by an angry stripling whom he afterwards strives to appease, is an extraordinary one. Such a course seems to

admit of but one solution. Washington in this instance appears, not as the great man who sees and acknowledges a wrong, for he had committed none, but as the wise man who declines for a trivial gratification to drive a friend of force and ability into revolt. This view can add nothing to our admiration of Washington's judgment, but it is of value in appreciating the mastering power of Hamilton's mind at that early period. No other event shows so clearly the impression he produced on his contemporaries.

Mr. Morse has passed lightly over Hamilton's military career, and in so doing has acted wisely. The Revolutionary period is the most picturesque part of our history. Every actor in it is known, and every battle-field familiar. To describe Hamilton's mission to Gates, his conduct at Monmouth, his reception of D'Estaing, is not necessary. Nor need his biographer quote the vigorous yet pathetic description of the flight of Arnold and the execution of André, for this has become classic. Still less is it needful to detail the attack at Yorktown. Americans know well how Hamilton led his countrymen across the abatis and captured in nine minutes one of the British redoubts whose fellow occupied our French allies half an hour. The merest outline of Hamilton's military career is all-sufficient. His services and successes were those of an ardent young man, full of courage and ability; but Hamilton's zeal has induced many persons to greatly overestimate his love of military life. To a mind like his, strong, energetic, executive, and systematic, a military life offered many attractions. He displayed all the necessary qualifications of a soldier, and gave promise of becoming, if the opportunity occurred, a successful general; but though his genius might have been forced by circumstances into this channel, it would never have turned there naturally. At no time during the war was utter absorption in military affairs characteristic of Hamilton. The letters to Duane, written at that time, on the formation of a stronger government, and the remarkable essays on finance, addressed to Robert Morris, clearly show the bent of his mind. This army life had, however, an important effect in strengthening his natural tendencies. The miserable discussions and ever-increasing impotence of Congress, its unworthy cabals against Washington,

and its failure to perform its first duties, all of which bore most hardly on the army, and was there most felt, filled Hamilton with a reasonable distrust and hatred of all weak popular governments. His efforts, while in Congress, in 1782-83, to provide for the debt, to pay off the soldiers, to secure proper garrisons by a new army, and to make public the debates of Congress, all proved fruitless, and served to deepen his already strong convictions. All his struggles came to nothing, and this drove him back from the hopeless task of legislation to the more congenial and profitable pursuit of his profession, which for the next five years he assiduously practised. He had been admitted to the bar after a very hasty and necessarily inadequate preparation, but his great powers of acquisition and his eloquence raised him at once to eminence as a lawyer, and made him strong both with bench and jury. Hamilton's mind adapted itself readily to law. To say how good a common lawyer he was is at this day impossible, if one is obliged to rely solely on the arguments which have been preserved. These are too few in number to warrant a conclusion, but the question of contemporary opinion is easily settled. His success was immediate and brilliant, and from the causes which he conducted it is clear that the first rank was conceded to him both by the profession and by the public. No one can say whether he was learned in the law, a scholar versed in the authorities; from his speedy preparation and the immediate rush of professional duties, the inference would be that he was not. He possessed, however, what is far more important in estimating his legal powers, the capacity in a high degree for pure, original, and sustained legal thought. This is proved beyond a peradventure. If any one wishes to test this statement, let him study the numerous state papers in which Hamilton was called upon to deal with questions of international law. There is in them much learning, but, what is of infinitely more importance, there is the creative power, the evidence of a mind able not only to develop principles, but to apply them to facts. Still better proof is afforded by his discussion of points of constitutional law, the best example of which is to be found in his argument on the National Bank,* which can be submitted to

* Hamilton's Works, Vol. III. p. 106.

the most severe of all tests, a close comparison with one of Marshall's. Let Hamilton's argument be read and then the decision in *McCulloch vs Maryland*.^{*} This is not the place to discuss the constitutionality of that famous measure, but as a piece of legal reasoning the argument of the Secretary does not suffer when put side by side with the luminous decision of the chief justice. Mr. Webster once said that when Marshall extended his forefinger and began, "It is conceded," he saw in anticipation all his favorite arguments falling helplessly to the ground. Hamilton produces the same sensation. If any one cares to try the experiment, in order to understand Marshall's greatness, let him endeavor to condense or confute one of his decisions. If any one doubts that Hamilton was a great lawyer, let him try the same experiment on his arguments. Success is no doubt possible in both cases; but we err very greatly if in either attempt a fair-minded man will not become convinced of the greatness of his opponent. We are very far from meaning by this that Hamilton was the equal of Marshall. We are aware of no one who has rivalled the chief justice, but that Hamilton was a great lawyer, and possessed a legal mind of the first order, is an opinion that admits of proof.

Toward the close of this first period of professional life Hamilton served in the New York Legislature. The same ill success attended his efforts for better government there, as in Congress. At last his exertions for a convention met with a response. He attended the preliminary meeting held at Annapolis, and drew up the address then issued, calling a convention of all the States at Philadelphia. With great difficulty Hamilton secured a delegation from New York to the Constitutional Convention. This delegation, of which he was a member, was so composed as to render him powerless, both his colleagues, Yates and Lansing, being Clintonians, and strong State-rights men. Hamilton's position in the Convention was, therefore, a wholly anomalous one, for the vote of his State was sure to be cast against every measure he favored. Mr. Morse has, we think, rightly described Hamilton's course in the Convention as a purely independent one, and has not sought to make his efforts there the foundation of his reputation

^{*} 4 Wheaton, p. 316.

as the great supporter of the Constitution. Hamilton presented a plan differing from both those before the Convention, and then withdrew, leaving his suggestions and arguments to do what good they might. His plan differed from the one finally adopted in only two essential particulars, — a Senate and President during good behavior, and the appointment of State governors by the central government. He returned to the Convention only at its close, to use his personal influence in favor of the acceptance of the final draft. Hamilton's subsequent efforts to secure the adoption of the Constitution form his chief and truest claim to glory in this respect. Discussion of the merits or effects of the remarkable series of papers known as the "Federalist" would be superfluous. The greatest legal minds have set the seal of their approbation upon them; and in modern times, in the formation of a great empire, statesmen have turned to them and to their principal author as the pre-eminent authority on the subject of federation. The effect of these remarkable essays in converting and forming public opinion can hardly be over-estimated; but Hamilton's most unalloyed triumph at this time, and one of the most brilliant of his life, was his victory in the New York Convention. Entering that convention in a small minority, faced by determined opponents led by men of first-rate ability, Hamilton ended by securing the adhesion of New York, — a matter at that time of vital importance to the new scheme. His speeches on this occasion afford an excellent insight into his mind, and enable the reader to understand his powers as an orator. One looks in vain in all he then said for those brilliant similes and those flights of the imagination which usually characterize oratory. Nowhere is there to be found an appeal to the emotions; there is not one passage intended to sway the hearts of men rather than their judgments. It is all pure reasoning and argument. And yet no one can read these speeches and not feel the mastering force of the great orator. How much more powerful must they have been to those who heard them, who could feel the influence of the earnest nature, who could see the light in the dark, deep-set eyes, and catch fire from the fervid temperament of him who so reasoned with them! It was the eloquence of reasoning, of arguments addressed to men's sober second

thoughts, of demonstration of error and of the support of truth. In this most difficult path Hamilton succeeded. His speeches bore the severest of all tests, and passed triumphantly through the ordeal. It is almost a proverb that a measure is rarely carried by a speech; Hamilton not only won over votes, but he actually converted a hostile majority into a favorable one. Unaided by popular outcry, in a State where, on his own showing, four sevenths of the people were against him, by the strength of his arguments, by the splendor of his reasoning, he brought his opponents to his feet, confessing that he was right and they wrong. The long annals of English debate have few such purely intellectual triumphs to show.

This brings us to an end of the necessarily slight sketch of Hamilton's early career. This portion of his life, especially his early youth, is rather obscure, and Mr. Morse has added nothing to our very meagre stock of knowledge. One would like to know more of Hamilton's antecedents, education, and boyhood. Perhaps Mr. Morse's researches have been fruitless, but certainty at least on this point would have been desirable. Another criticism may here be appropriately made which, unfortunately, cannot be confined to this portion of the work. There is nothing which shows us Hamilton as he was, nothing which brings home to us his personality, no attempt to give those delicate touches and fine traits which go to make up the vivid portraiture so essential to biography. The material may not exist in the fullest measure, but there is enough in an accessible form to have accomplished more than has been done. The book contains too much favorable criticism on Hamilton's career, and not enough delineation of the man.

With the victory in the New York Convention the first period of Hamilton's life closes. Rich as it was in results, it was still richer in promise. To the second period belong the great fruits of that promise, which have given Hamilton a place among the great men of his age and nation, and also the errors, the sometimes fatal errors, which marred the results of his achievements. To enter into an examination of Hamilton's course during this time, even were it as brief as that given to his early years, would be to write a history of the Federal

administrations. Criticism must here be confined to the most salient features of the picture. Two points stand out in great prominence; they are the dramatic points in this period of Hamilton's life. We refer, of course, to the financial policy which gave existence to the government and created a great party in its support, and to the conduct which resulted in the ruin of the Federalists. Before entering upon this discussion it becomes necessary to say a few words as to the condition of affairs with which the new government was called upon to deal, and also upon the component parts of the administration.

The Revolution, like all wars, especially all civil wars, had unsettled society, and had given a great shock to political habits. In this instance it had done even more, by destroying one of the balance-wheels of society. The aristocratic, wealthy, and conservative class had been almost entirely swept away. One of the principal barriers against anarchy had been destroyed, and free scope and full encouragement were thus given to the most pernicious and extreme errors of democracy. Washington, Hamilton, and a few others, here and there, had striven, apparently in vain, to stem the flood. But natural forces, stronger than any efforts individuals could make, were slow but sure allies, and in their operation made the Constitution a possibility. Time, of course, gave opportunity for the gradual re-formation of the conservative elements. New men who had acquired wealth, the remnants of the old Tory families, and intelligent and able men everywhere, now relieved from the stress of war, began again to come forward and to make their influence felt. This was, however, a very slow process, and alone would have been insufficient to produce a change. Something stronger was needed, or the new conservatism would have perished in a general wreck. The requisite pressure came, however, very readily. Affairs under the confederation went on steadily from bad to worse. Congress sank into a state of hopeless decrepitude, and their committee appointed to take charge of the nation forsook its post and left the United States for more than six months at a time without any Federal head. The finances went utterly to rack and ruin. All the States, with few exceptions, engaged actively in the work of wholesale repudiation. Disintegration set in. The large

States, in almost every instance, were threatened with dismemberment; and the smaller States contemplated withdrawal from the old confederation in order to form new ones. In Europe our position was pitiable and humiliating to the last degree. We had become a by-word and reproach in every mercantile community. Pitt refused to treat with us. Vergennes spoke of us with undisguised contempt; and all the Continental powers looked forward exultingly to our speedy ruin. Matters did not stop here. Disorder and repudiation were followed by general license and an outbreak of the communistic spirit. Insurrections began in various parts of the country, and finally culminated in the Shays Rebellion, in Massachusetts, which threatened extinction to such national government as still survived. Such a condition of affairs produced a violent reaction, which resulted in the adoption of the Constitution and the setting in motion of the new political machinery. The experiment was to be made while the enemies of a strong central government were awed into silence by the disorders which menaced the national life. The men who, afterwards, formed the Federal party had achieved a victory, and made an attempt at government possible, but they entered upon their task while still a minority.

Washington was elected to the Presidency as the choice of the whole people, and his wish was to govern in this sense and not as the leader of a party. With this desire he called to his administration the ablest men representing the opposing political elements. In short, Washington determined to try once more with an Anglo-Saxon race and a representative government the experiment of administration independent of party. In point of ability no such Cabinet has ever been formed in this country, although this ability was chiefly confined to two men. Knox was far from being the fool described by Jefferson, but he was equally removed from greatness. A brave soldier, an honest and rather commonplace man, Knox is chiefly to be praised for the sense and fidelity with which he followed the lead of Hamilton and eschewed the counsels of Jefferson. Randolph was an abler man than Knox, but is very far from deserving the same amount of praise. Vacillating and selfish, although regarded by Hamil-

ton as the blind follower of Jefferson, he was, nevertheless, a constant source of anxiety to the latter, who could never depend on him. False to his supposed leader at this time, he subsequently betrayed his official trust and was unfaithful to Washington himself. Around the other two Secretaries gathered gradually the opposing political forces of the country. Except that they were both men of genius, two more totally different characters than the Secretary of State and the Secretary of the Treasury can hardly be conceived. Jefferson was a sentimentalist; a very great one no doubt, but still a sentimentalist pure and simple. Hamilton was the very reverse. Hamilton reasoned on everything, and appealed to the reason of mankind for his support. Jefferson rarely reasoned about anything, but appealed to men's emotions, to their passions, impulses, and prejudices, for sympathy and admiration. Hamilton, in common with all the leaders of his party, was, in practice, a poor judge of human nature; when he failed to convince he tried to control. Jefferson knew human nature, especially American human nature, practically, as no other man in this country has ever known it. He never convinced, he managed men; by every device, by every artifice and stage effect, by anything that could stir the emotions, he appealed to the people. As he was the first, so was he the greatest of party leaders; in this capacity no one has ever approached him. Hamilton was consistent, strong, masculine, and logical. Jefferson was inconsistent, supple, feminine, and illogical, to the last degree. And these were the two men whom Washington had joined with himself to conduct in harmony the administration of a representative government and of an Anglo-Saxon race. That Washington, like William the Third, failed ultimately under such circumstances to carry on a no-party administration, is merely to say that he could not overcome the impossible. That he succeeded for four years in his attempt is simply amazing. If the violent extremes of thought and character represented by Hamilton and Jefferson be fairly considered and contrasted, and if it then be remembered that Washington held them together and made them work for the same ends and for the general good of the nation during four years, a conception of Washington's

strength of mind and character is produced which no other single act of his life can give.

Under such circumstances, and with an administration so constituted, the people of America began their experiment. Gouverneur Morris had said in a letter to Jay many years before: "Finance, my friend; the whole of what remains of the American Revolution grounds there."* So it might now have been said that the whole of what was to be the American Union grounded there. The bane of the Confederation, the power which tumbled that weak structure to the ground, was finance, and it was the pivot on which the future of the country turned. To Hamilton, of course, fell the duty of shaping, or rather of creating, a financial policy. On Hamilton was laid the burden of giving tangible existence to a government which as yet existed only on paper. The Secretary grappled fearlessly with the great problem before him, and the appearance of his first Report was the dawn of a new era in American history. That policy, which will make its author famous as long as the history of this country survives, was divided into three parts; the payment of the foreign debt, the payment of the domestic debt, and the assumption of the State debts. The necessity of paying the foreign debt was conceded by all, and duly provided for. The modern refinement which holds foreigners to be destitute of rights was not at that period broached, nor apparently so much as even thought of. On the second point great dissension arose. The extremists in opposition were in favor of not paying the domestic debt in full; the more moderate were in favor of discrimination among the holders of the certificates, — a proposition absurd in itself, and which involved an absolute contradiction of the very theory advanced. After a prolonged struggle this measure was also carried. Then came the tug of war, — the assumption of the State debts. In the second question the opposition had not a show of reason to support their views, but on the State debt two opinions were possible. Hamilton argued, "that it was a measure of sound policy and substantial justice," because "it would contribute, in an eminent degree, to an orderly, stable, and satisfactory arrangement of the national finances. Admitting, as ought to

* Sparks's Life of Gouverneur Morris, Vol. I. p. 234.

be the case, that a provision must be made, in some way or other, for the entire debt, it will follow that no greater revenues will be required, whether that provision be made wholly by the United States, or partly by them and partly by the States separately."

"The principal question then must be, whether such a provision cannot be more conveniently and effectually made, by one general plan, issuing from one authority, than by different plans, originating in different authorities? In the first case there can be no competition for resources; in the last there must be such a competition."

A vivid picture of the disasters and troubles which such a competition of resources would inevitably cause follows. Unfortunately, this vigorous passage is too long for quotation. The Report then continues:—

"If all the public creditors receive their dues from one source, distributed with an equal hand, their interest will be the same. And having the same interests they will unite in the support of the fiscal arrangements of the government,—as these too can be made with more convenience where there is no competition."

"If, on the contrary, there are distinct provisions, there will be distinct interests, drawing different ways. That union and concert of views, among the creditors, which in every government is of great importance to their security, and to that of public credit, will not only not exist, but will be likely to give place to mutual jealousy and opposition. And from this cause the operation of the systems which may be adopted, both by the particular States and by the Union, with relation to their respective debts, will be in danger of being counteracted." Proof is then offered that the State creditors would be in a worse position than those of the Union, and the injurious effects of this pointed out. The debts of the States are shown to be of the same nature as those of the Union, and this portion of the Report concludes with a plan for assumption.*

The opposition were not convinced, and the parties came to a dead-lock. Hamilton was driven to desperate measures. He had failed to convince, he could not control, he was unable to manage; there was but one escape,—he negotiated. Jefferson

* Hamilton's Works, Vol. III. pp. 13–17 inclusive.

was called to the rescue, and Hamilton arranged with him that the debts should be assumed, and the capital in return be placed on the Potomac. Mr. Morse has termed this transaction a "happy solution." Ingenious it may have been, but "happy" it certainly was not. Nothing so wrong in principle could have been "happy." It was a trade, a bargain, and the plain English of it is that Hamilton bought the necessary number of Southern votes. There is no evidence that Hamilton regarded it in any other way, and his silence on the point is very suggestive. The other party to the contract has left us a full account. Jefferson, having gratified his sectional prejudices, endeavored subsequently to escape from responsibility. In order to do this he raised a cloud of falsehood, and excused himself on the ground, unparalleled for its cool and consummate audacity, that he had been duped by Hamilton.

The financial policy was thus complete. Our intention is not to discuss its merits as a scheme of finance, or to endeavor to criticise it as a funding system, but simply to treat it as a great state policy. No reasonable man would now dispute the first two propositions as to the foreign and domestic debts, but on the assumption of the State debts opinions have differed. It has been urged that as a whole it was too strong a policy, that it endangered the existence of the government and of the Federal party. Those persons who argue in this way forget that there was no government and no party until this policy gave them both existence. If it be said that it endangered the success of the new scheme, the only reply is that a scheme too weak to stand such a strain was a worthless one. Weak, popular policy had wellnigh ruined America, and the time had come when a most vigorous and energetic one could alone save it. Putting aside for a moment the first two divisions, can it be fairly supposed that the policy would have been better without assumption? To our mind, the arguments of Hamilton, already cited, are absolutely convincing. Without assumption, disintegration and consequent anarchy were probable, trouble and disaster certain. The great merit of the scheme was in its cohesive force, and this of itself is overwhelming. Mutilated in this respect, the policy would have effected comparatively little, and would have been shorn of its

most essential part. But it is folly to attempt to multiply arguments. In a field where Hamilton has gathered, few men can find much to glean. The means by which the measure of assumption was carried are wholly indefensible, as to the men who participated. Such a trade was undoubtedly better for the country than non-assumption, but it has left a blot on the reputation of Hamilton and Jefferson alike. It was not a compromise, as Jefferson called it; it was a bargain and sale, the deliberate trading of one measure for another. But the policy, as such, was none the less great; and despite the railings of Hamilton's enemies, then and now, the great achievement of his life has earned the gratitude of the American people. Nothing can detract from the bold, creative genius and the manly energy which made national existence a possibility.

The work of Hamilton bore the test of immediate trial, and the success was brilliant. The Constitution was not destroyed but strengthened, the government was converted from a dream to a reality, and a great party was called into being. In discussing its merits as a scheme of finance, it can at most be said that Hamilton himself might have improved it. It cannot be urged that there was any other scheme then presented, or any objections then brought forward of the least weight. Jefferson's criticisms would disgrace a modern school-boy, and display a profundity of ignorance of which he can hardly be conceived capable. Madison opposed the policy because he was a Virginian, and wished to remain in public life; and the result was that the emanations of his mind, usually so lucid and powerful, are on this subject absurd to the last degree. If Hamilton erred in details, it can be proved in but one way, from his own utterances, assisted by the advances of a century of progress.

Such measures, while they were certain to rally a powerful party to their support, were equally certain to arouse a violent opposition. Very unfortunately, the opponents of Hamilton were incapable of offering any reasonable opposition to his measures, and this drove them to attack him personally, and on the score of honor and character. Even more unfortunate was the fact that the leader of such an opposition was Hamilton's colleague in the Cabinet. The inevitable explosion fol-

lowed. One great Secretary hired a wretched versifier and hack-writer by a government place, and then aided and abetted him in an attack on his colleague. The other great Secretary rushed himself into the arena, descended into the newspapers, with scarcely the poor excuse of self-defence, to deface and tear to pieces the character of the prime minister of the administration of which he was himself a member. A very sorry sight, indeed, do all parties in this broil present. After this there could, of course, be no peace, and the Cabinet soon broke up. The rest of Hamilton's official life was dignified and honorable. He had created and carried into operation the National Bank, at that time an essential and useful measure, and devoted himself to perfecting the organization and directing the policy which he had originated. The latter portion of the Secretaryship would be pleasant to dwell upon. To describe the attack made by the miserable Giles, backed secretly by Madison and Jefferson, and the sudden and energetic manner in which Hamilton turned upon the wretched tool and crushed him, would be to describe a very dramatic incident. Many morals useful at the present day also might be drawn from this proceeding. There was no chicanery, no abuse of the accusers, no attempt to divert attention from the real issue. On the contrary, Hamilton told every detail, and by almost superhuman efforts laid bare in two weeks his whole career as Secretary. Strong in his integrity and dignified in his virtue, Hamilton not only met every charge, but repeatedly demanded fresh investigations from those who had crushed themselves in attacking him. To dwell upon the last days in office, and the sincere regrets of Washington and the Federal party at his resignation, would be still pleasanter. But all this must be passed over, as well as those years of active professional life during which Washington still turned to his former Secretary for counsel and advice, still asked him to draft his messages, to advise the Cabinet, and to give his powerful support.

It is necessary to turn to the second great event in Hamilton's career, the downfall of his party. The Federalist party was a very remarkable political organization. For twelve years it not only carried out a strong policy, but it succeeded in raising up around the constitutional liberties barriers so

strong that when the great tide of democracy set in with the election of Jefferson, it was confined by certain limits which it could not destroy. In short, the Federalists had made disintegration so difficult as to be for many years practically impossible. Yet the men who accomplished all this were never, except during the French excitement, in sympathy with the majority of their countrymen. They succeeded by sheer weight of ability. With the exception of Jefferson and Madison, the latter of whom can be fairly numbered with neither party, the Federalists comprised all the able men in the country. Washington, Marshall, Hamilton, and John Adams are alone enough to justify all that can be said on the score of ability. But when it is considered that the second rank was filled by such men as Jay, Gouverneur Morris, Rufus King, Ames, Sedgwick, Pickering, Wolcott, Ellsworth, Dexter, Dana, and the two Pinckneys, to go no further, the combination must have been one of irresistible power. By their intellectual supremacy they carried one strong measure after another against great odds, and forced the people into the strait and narrow path which led to an honorable and prosperous future. But with all their strength and all their ability there was one condition, and that a very delicate one, on which their whole success depended. So long as all moved in harmony they could always defy a democratic majority; but the instant perfect unison was lost, ruin became inevitable. So long as Washington remained in the Presidency, the Federalists were safe. His unquestioned greatness formed a bulwark which no one was willing to dash himself against, and every one stood in awe of his personal character; but the withdrawal of Washington severed this bond, and in the nature of things the dissolution of the Federalists could have been averted only by the most consummate tact, the most delicate consideration and mutual forbearance on the part of the leaders. After the retirement of Washington, the Federalists were not even so far fortunate as to have an undisputed chief. There were two men, neither of whom claimed leadership, but each of whom considered himself its indisputable possessor. Unhappily, also, both were to a certain extent right. Adams was the leader of the party *de jure*; Hamilton, *de facto*. Neither considered the

other's claims, or apparently admitted that he had any. Adams's course was perfectly clear, to unite Hamilton to himself by the strongest tie. He had been elected by a party; he represented that party and their policy; he was bound by every rule of common-sense to hold his party together by all honorable means. The one necessary quality was tact, or rather the most consummate address, and this John Adams did not possess. It was perfectly possible to manage Hamilton; he was by no means an unmanageable or unreasonable man when properly treated. Washington had already managed him with perfect success. Tact, good judgment, consideration, and a certain amount of deference were required, and all might have gone well. But it never occurred to Adams that this was necessary, or that he alone was not quite competent to control the Federal party. A more fatal blunder was never committed. Whatever Hamilton's merits or defects may have been, it is certain, as a matter of fact, that to attempt to run the Federal party without at least his tacit approval was an impossibility. Hamilton's true course was equally obvious. Occupying the position he did, he was clearly at liberty to offer frankly his suggestions to the President. If these suggestions were rejected, then he ought either to have held his tongue, or, if the worst came to the worst, have gone into open opposition. Hamilton did neither. As Adams had a theory that he could control the party unassisted, so Hamilton had a theory that he could control Adams. In pursuit of this theory he committed a blunder as fatal as Adams committed in the pursuit of his. He undertook to manage Adams through the medium of his Cabinet. With both the leaders of the party hopelessly committed to radical errors, the new administration opened.

There is nothing in the whole province of history so disagreeable or so generally worthless as personal quarrels. In this case we are reluctantly compelled to the distasteful task of following the outlines of such a quarrel, because personal animosities were the sole cause of the premature ruin of a great party. We have tried to indicate the fatal theories to which both Hamilton and Adams were wedded; it merely remains to point out some of the worst results.

Even before the election trouble had arisen. Hamilton's

one desire was to defeat Jefferson for the Vice-Presidency ; he held, and rightly, that this could be effected in but one way,—by casting all the Federal votes equally for the two Federal candidates, Adams and Pinckney. The danger of this course was, that Pinckney, the second choice, might be brought in over Adams who was the first choice. This risk Hamilton was perfectly ready to take, and made no secret that, to him personally, such a result would have been agreeable. There is not a scintilla of evidence that he ever intended to do more. He has been charged with bad faith, but it is a perfectly groundless charge. He never pretended that the election of Pinckney would displease him, but he never intrigued with a view to defeat Adams. The accusation was freely made at the time by the friends of Adams, and denied by those of Hamilton. The publication of the private letters of all parties has sustained fully the denial. Adams, naturally enough, however, took great umbrage. With perfectly human inconsistency he was angry because Hamilton did in 1796 what eight years before he had abused him for not doing. The Adams men, however, threw away their votes, and Jefferson, as Hamilton had anticipated, in consequence secured the Vice-Presidency. Temporarily this cloud passed away, and for some time things went smoothly. At last came the alarm of war with France, and Washington was called upon to take command of the provisional army. He accepted the call on condition that the general officers should not be appointed without his consent. To this condition the President acceded. Washington made up his mind that, in the formation of the new army, the only proper and sensible course was to proceed entirely *de novo*, without any reference to the old army. He hesitated for some time as to whether Hamilton or Pinckney should be second in command ; from the beginning he considered Knox unfit to be next himself. In favor of Pinckney were political considerations of his weight and influence, since the seat of war would probably have been in the Southern States. In favor of Hamilton were greater abilities, his own preference, and that of the Federal leaders. The latter considerations prevailed, and he sent in Hamilton's name at the head of the list. The President sent it back, the order

unchanged, to the Senate, and the commissions were all dated the same day. The President then, Knox being dissatisfied, suddenly changed his mind, and put Knox first. Washington objected and wrote a letter, which could hardly have been pleasant reading for the President, who thereupon gave way. Hamilton's friends had written to Washington in the beginning urging his claims, as they had an undoubted right to do, and they wrote again in great alarm when the President changed his mind. Adams gave as his reason that he thought Knox legally entitled. Washington had rejected this theory from the beginning; and, at the very time when it was put forward, Adams was making other appointments which directly contravened his own rule. In describing this affair we have regarded nothing but the original letters from all parties, and have based our account, as far as possible, on the letter detailing the whole business from Washington,* whose sense and veracity we have no inclination to dispute. The most that can be said against Hamilton in this affair is, that he wrote a letter, in a tone somewhat disagreeably self-asserting, urging his own claims on Washington. On Adams must fall the whole blame for precipitating a quarrel on this point. The reason he gave for his action was perfectly untenable; and it is hard to see that he was actuated by anything except a dislike and dread of Hamilton. This difficulty, at any rate, made all parties bitter and suspicious. Hamilton and his friends began to see that they could not control the President, and to suspect that he meant to destroy and break them down, while Adams, smarting under a sense of defeat, became suspicious of intrigues to control him, which certainly existed, though not in this particular case. The quarrel engendered by this rash and mistaken action on the part of the President soon broke forth again with tenfold force. We have said that things went smoothly at first, a piece of good fortune which arose from the fact that Adams and Hamilton both favored the same policy, thus making an irresistible combination, against the power of which the well-disposed but very narrow-minded Cabinet struggled in utter helplessness. This is the strongest proof of the absolute necessity of that union which overween-

* Washington's Writings, Vol. XI. p. 304.

ing self-confidence caused both the Federal leaders to reject. In the great excitement attendant on the indignation against France, the Federal party received general support; and, for the only time in their history, found themselves masters of a complete majority which, with the war fever, seems to have turned their heads. They proceeded, unchecked, to great extremes. Their greatest mistake was the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts. The idea conveyed by Mr. Morse that Hamilton opposed these measures is quite erroneous, since, as a matter of fact, he was one of their strongest supporters.* The mistake has arisen from a too hasty reading of Hamilton's urgent letter to Wolcott, which was really directed against the first draft of the Sedition Act,—a most outrageous proposal, which no man in his senses would have supported. All the Federalists alike are responsible for these measures, which subsequently told so heavily against them. They were errors due to the dogmatic character of the Federal leaders, and their ignorance of the popular nature. All co-operated very heartily in the war measures, but Adams was the first to see the honorable opportunity for making peace. True to the policy of Washington, true to the best interests of the country, to his lasting honor he saw the right and pursued it. It was the greatest act of Adams's life, and is alone sufficient to stamp him as a truly great man. At a very similar juncture Washington had carried through the Jay treaty, and brought his party out from the ordeal more united than before. Lack of tact again proved Adams's stumbling-block; and though he carried through as bravely and courageously as Washington the same true policy, without a thought for himself or the hazards of the undertaking, he did it in such an unfortunate manner as to bring his party out of the struggle rent with dissensions. Hamilton was not bent on war at all events, but he was much less ready to seize the first chance for peace than Adams. By no means as violent against the proposed peace-commission as his less able friends, he yet opposed and strove to delay the departure of the envoys. He even tried, personally, to change the President's opinions; but Adams was too clearly in the right and too perfectly conscious of his own

* Hamilton's Works, Vol. VI. p. 387.

rectitude to think of yielding. The commission was sent, the country was saved from a useless and destructive war, but the Federal party was ruined. Adams's conduct in neglecting Hamilton, and in the affair of the generals, had been the first stroke; but it was reserved to Hamilton and his friends to deal the death-blow to the party. Adams, justly indignant with the course of his Secretaries, dismissed Pickering and McHenry; and Hamilton, on the eve of the election, published his famous attack on Adams. This was the great error of his life. Politically, it was a piece of inconceivable weakness and folly; morally, in the use made of the private information received from the Secretaries, it was wholly unjustifiable. Blinded by passion, Hamilton had ruined Adams and the party together, and was destined before reason returned to leave a blot on his own fame which cannot be effaced. This was the proposal to Jay to convene the actual legislature in extra session, change the electoral law, and take the choice of electors out of the hands of the legislature elect. A more high-handed and unprincipled suggestion cannot be conceived. Jay, very properly, would not listen to it.

All was now over. Adams and Hamilton between them had destroyed their party, and on them the whole blame must rest. Hot-tempered and domineering, neither would give way, and the real if not avowed struggle between them for supremacy brought down in undistinguishable ruin the party they had helped to build up. The Federal party had done a great work, and had insured, so far as possible, a stable government. It found America degraded in the eyes of the world, weak and helpless, rent with internal disorders, on the very brink of final ruin. It left her respected abroad, strong and powerful at home, secure under a settled and stable government, fairly started on the broad road of greatness and prosperity. So great had been its policy, so wise its measures, that though Mr. Jefferson and his friends came into power, they were forced to accept the system of their enemies. With the exception of the Alien and Sedition Laws, there was no act of the Federalists that the Democrats either dared or could undo. The debt of gratitude due to that now almost forgotten party

is immense, and their admirers may point to their achievements for vindication and be content. Yet there is no sufficient reason for assuming that the career of the Federalists must necessarily have ended as it did. There was at least a fair prospect that a long period of usefulness was still possible, that in their strong hands the miseries and disgraces of the next fifteen years might have been avoided, and that they, instead of their opponents, might have enjoyed the fruits of their own hard labors. Ultimately, Jeffersonianism must have prevailed, but at the time of its actual triumph it came too soon. Jefferson's early victory was secured solely by the errors of his opponents. So long as the Federalists were united they were invincible. But Adams's display of jealousy in his appointments of major-generals, his rough-shod riding in the case of the peace commission, and Hamilton's mad retaliation upon him, together with the intrigues of the Secretaries, destroyed at once the subtle charm. The delicate organization, once shattered, could never be restored.

There is a feeling of intense relief in turning from Hamilton amidst the falling ruins of his party, to consider his conduct in regard to Burr. The last of the Federalists to lose his head, he was the first to regain it. Gouverneur Morris has described himself after the defeat as standing in the unenviable position of the one sober man among a crowd of drunken revellers. The simile was only too apt. The Federalists were drunk with rage, maddened by their own folly, frenzied with hatred of their arch-enemy Jefferson. In this dangerous mood they listened to the intriguing whispers of Burr. Hamilton threw himself into the breach. He hated Jefferson, he was personally on good terms with Burr. But he knew Burr's character, and he abhorred the fraud which was contemplated. A few Federalists listened finally to the voice of their leader, and Burr was defeated. The foresight, the courage, the energy of Hamilton saved the country from a great danger, and his party from a disgrace a thousand times worse than any defeat. Almost the last act of his life was directed to the same object, and we see him at the close striving to save the good name of his friends and support the Union he had done so much to create.

We have tried to depict Hamilton as the soldier, orator, jurist, statesman, and financier. A few words on him as a writer, and the criticism is complete. Compared with the other writers of that period when every distinguished man did more or less political writing, it is a simple matter to fix Hamilton's position. He was easily first. Not only have his writings alone survived for the general reader out of the wilderness of essays and pamphlets of the last century on similar subjects, but the "Federalist" has become a text-book in America and an authority in Europe. Hamilton, the writer, will, however, bear a severer test,—that of abstract merit. His writings deal exclusively with the great questions of that day, and have lost their living interest. Yet as specimens of political literature, as disquisitions on constitutions and the art of government, and as masterpieces of reasoning, they are not only the best this country has produced, but they will take high rank among the best efforts of England. One quality which raised Hamilton in this regard beyond his contemporaries was his freedom from the didactic tone which so mars the writings of the latter half of the last century. Hamilton's style was simple, nervous, and modern in feeling, and any one who has tried to condense one of his arguments will appreciate the statement that the thought is compressed to the last point consistent with clearness. Yet forcible and convincing as all Hamilton's essays are, pure as is the style and vigorous and rapid as is the flow of thought, they are hard reading. Admiring them as models and as great intellectual efforts, one is forced to confess them dry to the last degree. This, of course, is in great measure due to the subjects treated, but it was also partly owing to Hamilton's character. Judged solely by his letters, his speeches, his essays, etc., Hamilton appears to have been almost entirely destitute of imagination and of humor. One looks in vain in all he wrote or said for a fancy, a simile, a metaphor, or a touch of fun. That most human and attractive of all senses, the sense of the ridiculous, nowhere appears. Throughout, abounds the purest, the most eloquent reasoning, which, when enforced by the bodily presence, the piercing eye, and all the forces of that passionate nature, must have made the orator irresistible. But when we

sit down to read his works unmoved by his personal influence, we are convinced, we admire more and more deeply, but we are never amused or absorbed. Still, in this field, neither imagination nor humor, however agreeable, are essentials, and Hamilton has certainly won in his own domain a reputation as a writer unsurpassed by any of his countrymen.

And so the list of his high titles to distinction concludes. The great question of all is still to be answered: What of Hamilton as a man? He has been charged with being a monarchist in principle and a believer in a monarchy bottomed on corruption; with being more British than American at heart; with being a corruptionist and the proprietor of a corrupt legislative squadron; and with having acted towards the Adams wing of his own party with continued bad faith, and with a design of personal aggrandizement. To enter upon a proof of his intellectual greatness would be sheer waste of words, and therefore to weigh the charges of his enemies which affect his moral greatness is alone necessary.

A great mistake has, we think, been made by the defenders and eulogists of Hamilton in dealing with the first of these charges. He was a believer, theoretically, in the English form of government, and considered it the best, at that time, ever invented. It should be remembered that the "best government the world has ever seen" did not then exist, and there can be no question that the English government was the best model, and the only one from which an Anglo-Saxon race could derive wholesome lessons. So far Hamilton was a monarchist. That he ever seriously believed it desirable or possible to establish a monarchy, and one "bottomed on corruption," in the United States, it is preposterous to suppose. There is absolutely no evidence except the highly veracious gossip of Jefferson, that he ever thought so, and such a theory would, moreover, have stamped him as a political idiot, which he certainly was not. On the other hand, he certainly was not an ardent republican. He believed a republican government to be radically defective. Morris says:—

"General Hamilton hated republican government, because he founded it with democratical government; and he detested the latter, because he believed it must end in despotism, and be, in the mean

time, destructive to public morality. He believed that our administration would be enfeebled progressively at every new election, and become at last contemptible. He apprehended that the minions of faction would sell themselves and their country, as soon as foreign powers should think it worth while to make the purchase. In short, his study of ancient history impressed on his mind a conviction that democracy, ending in tyranny, is, while it lasts, a cruel and oppressive domination.

“ . . . His observation and good sense demonstrated that the materials for an aristocracy do not exist in America ; . . . moreover the extent of the United States led him to fear a defect of national sentiment.

“ He heartily assented, nevertheless, to the Constitution, because he considered it as a band which might hold us together for some time, and he knew that national sentiment is the offspring of national existence. He trusted, moreover, that in the chances and changes of time, we should be involved in some war, which might strengthen our union and nerve the executive. He was not, as some have supposed, so blind as not to see that the President could purchase power, and shelter himself from responsibility, by sacrificing the rights and duties of his office at the shrine of influence. But he was too proud, and, let me add, too virtuous, to recommend or tolerate measures eventually fatal to liberty and honor. It was not, then, because he thought the executive magistrate too feeble to carry on the business of the state, that he wished him to possess more authority, but because he thought there was not sufficient power to carry on the business honestly. *He apprehended a corrupt understanding between the executive and a dominating party in the legislature, which would destroy the President's responsibility ; and he was not to be taught, what every one knows, that where responsibility ends, fraud, injustice, tyranny, and treachery begin.*

“ General Hamilton was of that kind of men who may most safely be trusted, for he was more covetous of glory than of wealth or power. But he was, of all men, the most indiscreet. He knew that a limited monarchy, even if established, could not preserve itself in this country. He knew, also, that it could not be established, because there is not the regular gradation of ranks among our citizens, which is essential to that species of government. And he very well knew that no monarchy whatever could be established but by the mob.

“ But although General Hamilton knew these things from the study of history, and perceived them by the intuition of genius, he never failed on every occasion to advocate the excellence of, and avow his attachment to, monarchical government. By this course he not

only cut himself off from all chance of rising into office, but singularly promoted the views of his opponents, who, with a fondness for wealth and power, which he had not, affected a love for the people, which he had and they had not. Thus meaning very well, he acted very ill, and approached the evils he apprehended by his very solicitude to keep them at a distance." *

This account has been given at length, because it conveys the best idea of Hamilton to be found anywhere. The writer's powers of discernment have enabled him in a few vivid sentences to give us a picture of Hamilton's genius as well as of his errors of judgment. From this it may be seen how far he was from believing in a monarchy in this country; how he sought, above all things, an honest and honorable government. Hamilton wished a strong constitutional government, the only safeguard for rational, popular liberty. He was not prepared to urge any special scheme, but he was eager for a strong government and the creation of a powerful national sentiment. The lines above printed in italics we may well take home to ourselves in the struggles of to-day as a wholesome lesson and a proof of Hamilton's foresight. No less does this quotation show in the strongest light Hamilton's errors, the headstrong indiscretion, and the pertinacity of his opinions as instanced by his belief in the strengthening effects of war, which drove him into opposition to Adams's peace-commission.

Hamilton never believed in the Constitution. He considered it defective, and urged an executive and senate during good behavior, and the appointment of State governors by the central government. There is no finer trait in Hamilton's character than the unswerving fidelity with which he strove to preserve and strengthen a Constitution which he believed to be thoroughly insufficient. Nothing shows more strongly the nobleness which rises above all personal feelings by honest devotion to the best interests of the people. Hamilton also considered the great danger to the national life to reside in the State governments, and on this ground he urged the appointment of governors, and favored a division of the large States. A century's experience has shown the justice of these fears. The dangers to national existence, the peril of disunion, Ham-

* Sparks's Life of G. Morris, Vol. III. p. 260.

ilton's especial dread, have arisen since his time from various causes, the most dangerous of which was of course slavery; but all these causes have found their support in the pernicious extremes of States' rights resting on the strength of the State governments. Whether Hamilton's suggestions would have obviated these dangers, or whether they would, by going too far the other way, have created new ones, must be matter merely for speculation. While convinced of the soundness of his views, Hamilton was too keen an observer not to see the value of the innate Anglo-Saxon principle of local self-government, and that States' rights, founded on a law of nature, local attachments, were, in the absence of an aristocracy, the only sure barrier against extreme democracy and its inevitable concomitant, despotism. In the New York Convention he elaborately explained that he merely wished to so confine the State governments that they could not impede the national one. After his usual manner, he then formulated the whole theory of States' rights by saying that "destruction of the States must be at once a political suicide," and that, "the States can never lose their power till the whole people of America are robbed of their liberties."* No man understood the true nature of the Constitution or the true system for the country better than Hamilton. He described it as a system in which "the great desiderata are a free representation and mutual checks."† He believed the only possible form of government, then, was a Republic, and he was better than a republican in theory, and a democrat in practice; he was a monarchist in theory, and a republican in practice, the devoted friend of the best good of his country.

Hamilton's incautiously expressed preferences for a monarchical form as in theory the best state afforded ample ground to his enemies to brand him as "British Hamilton." No charge was ever more baseless or absurd. He observed the strictest neutrality towards all nations. To prove this it is sufficient to trace his course in 1782 on the secret article, to read his arguments on the questions which arose with England during Washington's first term. Long before the nominal author had thought of it, Hamilton had formulated the Monroe doctrine.

* Hamilton's Works, Vol. II. pp. 459 and 461.

† Ibid., Vol. II. p. 453.

On the Democrats alone rests the heavy responsibility of importing foreign affairs into our politics. Because Hamilton would not aid in plunging the country into war with England on behalf of France, because he considered the French Revolution infamous in its course, because he believed in adopting the same policy towards the English as towards the French, Jefferson and his Jacobin following stigmatized him as a British sympathizer and adherent.

Neither was Hamilton a believer or practitioner of corruption. His personal integrity was above reproach, and his letter to Lee* shows how delicately he conceived his duties in office. There is not a shadow of proof that he ever used his power corruptly, or corrupted anybody, except when he bought a few Democratic votes by agreeing to support the plan for a Southern capital. The corrupt legislative squadron was one of the many fancies of Jefferson's fertile brain. Men there undoubtedly were in Congress who held United States certificates, and as undoubtedly these men were benefited by the Treasury measures; and if this is sufficient to make Hamilton a corruptionist, then he was one.

The more serious charge of acting in bad faith is unfortunately true in two instances. When Hamilton published his attack on Adams, he used the private Cabinet information of the Secretaries to sustain his accusation, and in so doing was, in our opinion, guilty of bad faith. The second instance was the proposal to Jay to change the electoral law by an arbitrary exercise of power. He committed both faults when he had lost all self-control, was wild with passion against Adams, and maddened by the disasters awaiting his party. This does not excuse Hamilton, but it shows the cause of the two dark errors of his public life. The other charge of the Adams faction, that he sought empire and personal aggrandizement, seems to us perfectly baseless. Hamilton loved glory, but only when obtained by serving his country; and his opposition to the peace policy was due solely to his obstinate belief that a war would be efficacious in strengthening the government and in assuring success to his party. He made a mistake in political judgment, but he sought no unworthy or selfish object.

* Hamilton's Works, Vol. V. p. 446.

Mr. Morse has given us no picture of Hamilton personally and in private life, because no materials exist. But his brilliancy in conversation and his personal fascination must have been extreme. Adored by his own family, beloved by his personal friends, he was also unhesitatingly followed by the leading men of his party. His adherents were not sentimental admirers: they were cool, hard-headed, practical, able men, and their unquestioning devotion to Hamilton, and acknowledgment of his supremacy, are the strongest proof of his commanding power.

Hamilton's passions were his bane, and we have tried to show that it was owing to their vehemence that in moral strength he fell far short of his intellectual greatness. Uncurbed passion has left a stain upon his private character, and in a similar way uncurbed passion caused his political errors, and made him a principal in the ruin of his party. The moral sense was not always strong enough to rise over and restrain the passions, and was, therefore, dulled, and the greatness on one side diminished.

We have tried to deal with Hamilton's various careers, with the different sides of his nature, and to judge him fairly and impartially, bearing in mind that great genius and splendid abilities demand severer tests than the ordinary talents of mankind. But posterity will judge Hamilton as a whole. The future historian will analyze and dissect, but the final tribunal will pass sentence on the whole man, moral and intellectual, statesman and financier, jurist and soldier, orator and writer, all combined. What will that sentence be? It is always dangerous to anticipate posterity's verdict. But we may safely assume that posterity will not accept the opinion of his enemies; that it will not agree with Jefferson or Adams. Will it then accept the judgment of Hamilton's strongest friends? Probably not. Will it accept the judgment of Washington? The people of the United States have been wont to reverence and abide by the decisions of their great Chief Justice. Will they accept the decision of John Marshall, "that Hamilton was the greatest man the country has ever seen, always excepting Washington"?